



Immigration and the Fracturing of Community

Transcript of plenary session held in Philadelphia on June 12, 1997

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JOYCE APPLEBY: It's certainly fitting that Richard Rodriguez should open our third section of the agenda because he has written so trenchantly about the community of language and the language of community. Yesterday when we were talking with Chris Edley about how we changed our minds and how perceptions and attitudes could be modified, and in thinking about introducing Richard Rodriguez, I thought that, for most of us, or for many of us, these changes have come by reading a powerful book. And that was certainly the case for me, and I'm sure others, in reading Richard Rodriguez's autobiography, "Hunger of Memory." Because, as you'll recall, it came out in '82 at the very beginning of the period in which the country was engaging formally and informally with issues of multiculturalism and identity politics. And he evoked, certainly, the issue of personal choice that is involved in shaping one's identity and choosing one's community. So it's, as I said, entirely fitting that he should develop these questions this morning around immigration and community and the way in which immigration and concerns about immigration force us to define our national community or even our local community, as one of the greetings that we did indicates.

Richard Rodriguez is a Californian, through and through. He was born in San Francisco, grew up in Sacramento, got his degree at Stanford. After his work at Stanford he studied at Columbia and then at UC Berkeley and also at the Warburg Institute in London. His prize-winning "Hunger of Memory" was followed by "Days of Obligation," which was also a contender for prizes. He is now an editor with the Pacific News Service, as we all know, a regular essayist on "The MacNeil-Lehrer Hour" and writes frequently for The New York Times, for Mother Jones, for The Wall Street Journal and The New Republic and other publications.

It's with a great deal of pleasure that I introduce Richard Rodriguez and sit down and look forward to what he's going to tell talk to us about this morning.

RICHARD RODRIGUEZ: Thank you very much. I'm very honored to be here in this room, particularly, and to be talking to you today. You know, parachuting into a meeting like this, one feels ultimately awed by the company of this commission, but also by the impossibility of knowing exactly how to be useful, and I come first with the apology that my ambitions in my working life are literary, and though I write about social and political issues and cultural issues, the intent always is for a kind of literary elegance. I'm an essayist and—at least in my own mind —that is of less and less significance in the world of Border's Books.

But there I become a journalist and it is probably as a journalist that I'm coming to you today, to talk about the world that I'm beginning to see, the world of the United States of America. I hope these comments are useful, and if they're not, then, perhaps, in the question-and-answer period, I can direct some of your concerns more—or at least address some of your concerns more directly.

I should say, secondly, as a preface, that the title of my presentation, which is "Immigration and the Fracturing of Society," is not my title. It's not bad. It's not a bad title, "Immigration and the Fracturing of Society," but I'm very much interested in immigration, and very much have been seen as an apologist for immigration in recent years. And even though I'm not an

apologist for illegal immigration, I have been certainly one of the voices in California that have been urging a kind of calm about the issue, because I think it has been a problem overstated more than real. Nonetheless, I want to talk about illegal immigration in the course of these comments today.

The fracturing of society is an interesting way of thinking about immigration because it seems to me that there is something profoundly unsettling about immigration and the American experience. Think of Franklin's own wondering about whether Germans belong in this country—German Catholics belong in this country. I've always been intrigued by the debate in the 1840s—the debate of nativists against the Irish immigration, having to do more with religion than with ethnicity or race, certainly; the argument being, as war was brewing with Mexico, that if you allowed the Irish into the country, you would jeopardize the Protestant states. The—the—the Irish would—would—would join with their Mexican brothers, fellow Catholics, and challenge the Protestant primacy of the United States. I've always thought that was a pretty good argument against Irish immigration, except that it didn't take into account Pat Buchanan, which is to say it didn't take into account the fact that maybe Irish Catholics could become Protestant over time in their culture.

We use Canadian words like multiculturalism these days, but I'm very much a believer that the United States of America exists and that you swallowed me a long time ago. It may be that I'm about to swallow you, but that's yet to be seen.

The interesting thing about the Irish, of course, is that a number of them did rebel against the United States—the San Patricios in Mexico during the Mexican War. There were a number of young Irish recruits who fought on the American side for a time and then changed sides. About their story, you hear almost nothing in American history books. But I assure you that in Mexico they are very well-known. The St. Patrick's Brigade, or the San Patricios—changed sides and fought for Mexico against the United States of America. About half of them were apprehended by US troops and were hung in the zocalo in Mexico City as an example. About half of them escaped. Some

of them became members of great Mexican families. Werner Gorman, for example, the muralist, comes from that Irish family. There they were and the leader of the pack, a man named Jack Ryan, whose interest in Mexico may have had more to do with cantinas than with the ideology, ends up disappearing in Mexico. I'm very much interested in Jack Ryan and what he represents.

There is something unsettling about immigrants because they do turn America—or they undo America, it seems to me. At the very point at which we think we have a communal identity, at the very point at which we know who we are—Protestants, united from Western Europe—suddenly the immigrants come from Southern Europe or from Eastern Europe and suddenly we don't know exactly what they mean to our community. The great arguments of the natives against immigrants in the 19th century had more to do with religion than—than anything else, the question of whether a Jew could be an American, whether or not a Catholic could be an American. And it suggests to me that there really wasn't a 19th century in a way that we don't quite understand now, a deeper appreciation of the theological basis of this country, which was Low Church Protestant, and remains so, in my opinion, as a good Irish Catholic today.

It is true that after a generation or two, usually by the grandchildren of the immigrants, there is a tendency in the United States to romanticize the immigrant, to see the immigrant as precisely the meaning of America, to see the immigrant as the figure who teaches us most about what it means to be an American, the person who comes and remakes herself in this new land. And the immigrant, in mythological terms, goes from being the outsider to being at the very center of the mythology of the country. None of this, of course, do we say to the Vietnamese immigrant who serves us our breakfast this morning at the hotel. But I think in about maybe another 40 years, we will be prepared to say that about the Vietnamese immigrant, that he, with his breakfast tray—he is the meaning of Philadelphia.

Before that, before romanticization, we are very much engaged in issues of money and issues of labor. My landlord in San Francisco, who does not think

we need more immigrants in this country and certainly does not approve of illegal immigration, nonetheless, when it came time to get a new roof for our very lavish restored Victorian house, sought three bids. It was rather like a Shakespearean puzzle with these three different caskets—one of silver, one of gold and one of lead. The golden casket was from the yuppie firm in San Francisco and the bid was for \$17,000 to reroof the building. Lot of money. The next bid, the silver bid, came from a much less distinguished roofing company and that was for \$11,000. And the third bid came from a group of men who are Salvadorans, who do not speak English and who required only that they be paid in cash, no questions asked. And they would reroof our Victorian house in beautiful San Francisco, our charming Victorian house built in the 1860s—the house that reminds us of what genteel San Francisco used to be like when three generations lived behind one oak door. They would reroof our house for \$7,000. They were the ones that were hired.

I should tell you that I had the very, very strange impression yesterday, flying out against the time of day, that sitting on the airplane, reading a newspaper, I had the strangest impression that I do not exist. I was reading, I think it was USA Today, and there was a report from Gallup. The Gallup Poll had conducted a survey on race relations on America. And it had found out that race relations in America are very bad, especially, incuriously, as you go higher up on the economic ladder. For example, college-educated blacks were very, very pessimistic about their relationships, their racial relationships. But then it turned out as you read this article that it was only concerned with white and black Americans. There were no references to the Vietnamese man who served me breakfast today. There was certainly no reference to the Chinese grocer at the corner. There was no reference to the Guatemalans in San Francisco or to the Salvadorans who reroofed our Victorian house. None at all. And that was because in the American conversation, when we talked about race, the conversation has been conducted in white and black.

What I represent, I would like to suggest to you this morning—I represent a kind of rude intrusion into that conversation. And in that sense, I begin the task of unsettling the United States of America. I will undo your conversation. Because it seems to me at times, listening to this black-and-

white conversation, as I have for most of my life, a brown man in this country, that it had, ultimately, nothing to do with me and that in various ways that I was supposed to attach myself to one side or the other at will. What was this white-and-black dialectic? Why does it admit so little reference to anyone else?

Listening last night, late at night, because I couldn't go to sleep, the discussion of the O.J. Simpson trial on one of these remote channels that no one should watch—Bill Clinton, who strikes me as the last black-and-white president of the United States, who, nonetheless, in San Diego this weekend, will refer, and rather dramatically in his strong terms, to the fact that now we are a multiracial, multiethnic society, multicultural—Canadian language.

But Bill Clinton, in referring to the O.J. Simpson trial, referred to the fact that the O.J. Simpson trial taught whites and blacks and others to look at ourselves, he said. It wasn't clear what we were supposed to see, but it taught us to look at ourselves. And I thought to myself, 'There it is: "the others." I am the other at this conversation.'

I noticed that there are almost no Hispanics in this room, or I suspect that there are very few Hispanics in this room, and I do not see very many Asian faces in this room. And I wonder, without intending any rudeness, what you make of that absence, how we conduct an American conversation, in this day and age, in 1997, without Hispanic and Asian faces.

I'm sounding more regressive than I mean to, but it's 6:00 in the morning in California and perhaps that's my problem. My broadness represents something else, and it's that other thing that I would like to stress this morning, and that's some notion of impurity into the American conversation. Against the notion of white and black, the notion of brownness, I would like to suggest, does not represent a third race, but rather some blurring of racial distinction. I ask you to look at me carefully and to listen to what you are hearing. I am speaking to you in American English that was taught me by Irish immigrant women in California. I've always liked the Irish nuns. They always liked the irony of having been taught English—the

Queen's English—by the Irish. I also carry this Indian face and a Spanish surname as well as this California first name.

You might wonder about the complexity of historical factors, the collision of centuries, that creates Richard Rodriguez. Because my brownness is a[n] exact result of that collision. And I come to you as an impurity. There is no adjective that attaches to the Mexican in the American lexicon more easily, more frequently, than the dirt—than the adjective `dirty'—dirty Mexican. In the 19th century, the Texans used to say that the reason that Mexicans were so easy to defeat in battle is because we had diluted the strength of being either pure Indian or pure Conquistador, pure Spaniard, by mixing.

We were race-mixers, and, as you know, in the American experience, that is not a thing we celebrate easily to this day. We speak more easily about our diversity than we do about the fact that I might become you or that I might begin dating your daughter or that you might become my next-door neighbor or that we might eat the same food or that we might be the same people or that I might be in love with you. We settle more easily on the Canadian notion of diversity because I think it keeps us intent on the notion that we are separate, that our elbows do not have to touch, that I do not have to become you, that I can remain Mexican, whatever that means, in the United States of America, and Sacramento, California, with Irish nuns.

I was invented in 1973 by Richard Nixon. Richard Nixon had instructed the Department of Management and Budget to determine the major racial and ethnic groups in this country, and they came up with five. You can imagine this bureaucratic liberation over the phone books of America. They came up with five. They are in no order of preference—white, black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian and, last but not least, ladies and gentlemen, the Hispanic. I'm Hispanic.

The interesting thing about Hispanics, of course, is that you never meet a Hispanic in Latin America. I've yet to meet one in Latin America. You meet Chileans and Peruvians and Mexicans. You do not meet Hispanics. If you ask them about Hispanics, they have heard that there are Hispanics up in Dallas, but they themselves have never met any. `Hispanics' is rather one of those

strange gringo contrivances like flavorless salsa that you find only in Dallas, Texas. It is a strange new definition of the world that suggests that I have more in common with Argentine-Italians than I have with American Indians, that there is more uniting the white Cuban and the mulatto Puerto-Rican than there is differentiating them.

Very interesting conclusion Richard Nixon reached, and those conclusions have been the basis for the way we organize our society, the way we think about what the community of this room is. As a Hispanic, I will tell you, and with some irony—I will tell you, nonetheless, that two statistics recently from the Census Bureau interest me very much. The first statistic that was—this was as recent as two—three—three weeks ago. The Census Bureau told us in Washington that by the year 2005—by the year 2005, which is not so far away, Hispanics will outnumber blacks in the United States, to become, as we have been ready to become for some time now, the largest minority in the United States. And I would like to suggest to you that is a real issue that we face in this country—Hispanic and black.

The Rand Corporation published, about two weeks ago, this study on immigration in which they concluded after all immigration is a plus, economically, for the United States, though they admitted that the competition at the bottom is where the real action is, and that Karl Marx—though they did not say this, I will say this—Karl Marx was wrong. It was never rich against poor; it was poor against near-poor. If you want to see the competition in Los Angeles today, between black and Hispanic, go to the bottom.

I would remind you that the first suit brought in bilingual Miami, brought against the necessity that I need to speak Spanish to have this job, was brought by two black cleaning women who were suddenly told by their Cuban employers that in order to push that broom and mop that bathroom, they needed to speak the language of Cortez. And they brought suit. I will tell you also that in the famous black neighborhoods of Los Angeles today, this moment, at 6:15 in the morning in Los Angeles, the famous black neighborhoods of Los Angeles—Compton, Watts, south central—are all

becoming Hispanic. Watts will become in its majority Hispanic within the next three or four years. There is a competition in Los Angeles right now at City Hall between Hispanic and black that is real and fierce, and the Hispanic backing of Richard Riordan against the black backing of Tom Hayden will have real political consequences for Los Angeles.

But while I want to say that, and I want to admit that this competition exists, I also want to tell you that the comparison of Hispanics to blacks—the comparison carried too far, I think, leads ultimately to complete nonsense. There is no such thing as a Hispanic race. There is no Hispanic race in the world. You go to Latin America, you see every race of the world. You see white Hispanics, you see black Hispanics, you see brown Hispanics who are Indians, many of whom do not speak Spanish because they resisted. You see Asian-Hispanics; one of them runs one of the largest countries of South America. There is no Hispanic race, so to compare blacks and Hispanics already risks comparing—well, I don't even want to say apples and oranges. I would say apples and kitty cats. They're not comparable, at some level.

We don't even know this about ourselves. We've gotten so used to impersonating a third race now, the great new third race in America. I was at Yale University. This tedious woman was chasing me all afternoon, not with romantic intention, but rather to tell me how wrong I was about some political opinions I have. And I thought to myself, you know, 'How am I going to get rid of her?' She kept on telling me that she was the first Hispanic at Yale to do this, the first Hispanic to win this prize. She now works at some law firm in Park Avenue. And so the day went and I thought to myself, 'Well, maybe she needs a cup of coffee.' And we sat down and she turns out that she's a Cuban, a white Cuban. Nothing wrong with being a white Cuban. Ricky Ricardo was a white Cuban. But she started telling me about the fact that Hispanics are at Yale University in this predicament or that. And then she said, you know, 'We people of color,' and I thought to myself, you know, 'Maybe I'm traveling too much. Maybe she didn't even know what color she was. So much for a Yale education.'

The most interesting thing about Mexico, the country of my ancestry is that Mexico may be in a calamity right now. Mexico may be a mess. Mexico may be collapsing for various reasons and in various ways. But Mexico has one boast that I pass along to you and that was that we joined the world in Mexico. Jose Vasconcelos, the great Mexican educator and philosopher, talks about the Mexican as *la raza cosmica*, the cosmic race, that in Mexico what one finds as early as the 18th century already is the predominant population of mixed-race people. The mestizo predominated over the pure European or the pure Indian by the 18th century. By the 18th century, the slave had been freed in Mexico and the intermarriage rate between the Indian and the African in Mexico was greater than in any other country in the Americas and has never been equal since.

Jose Vasconcelos calls us *la raza cosmica*, by which he means not simply that we are Indian, not simply that we are Spanish, but that we are Africans, *homos negros*, and that we are Asians, *homos chinos*. There is no country in the Americas that speaks in such a way about its mixture, speaks with such pride. I would like to argue that instead of thinking of the Canadian model of multiculturalism, you might begin to think of the Mexican alternative of a *mestizaje* society, away from the multicultural safety that Canada offers me.

Hispanic is not a racial term, as I say; it is an ethnic term. It is a term of culture. So when you hear the Census Bureau say in the second place—that by the year 2050—by the year 2050, by midcentury, one-fourth of all Americans will identify themselves as Hispanic, think about what you are hearing. You are not hearing that by the year 2050 one-fourth of all Americans will be brown, you are hearing that by the year 2050 one-fourth of all Americans will identify themselves culturally, which is to say, the black Dominican today who identifies himself as Hispanic is identifying himself by virtue of culture rather than by virtue of race, and that is revolutionary—that in a country that takes its understandings of community from race and color, to have that large a group of Americans identify themselves by virtue of language or the identification of culture, is an extraordinary change and a revolutionary one and I—as I say, I come to this conversation as a rude intrusion.

The only question I'd like to pose this morning is do we exist as a culture? Is there a Hispanic culture? Do we mean something culturally in the United States. Henry Cisneros, a few years ago, in a room very much like this, when he was the golden boy of the Hispanic movement, gathered together a group of Hispanic politicians to try to determine whether there was Hispanic politics in America, a Hispanic political agenda, and, indeed, there is a Hispanic caucus very much modeled on the African-American caucus in Washington. You never hear much about it because after two weeks, the group that Henry Cisneros convened could not come up with an agenda. There is no Hispanic politics. What, after all, unites the eighth-generation New Mexican, who considers himself a Spaniard, with the white Republican Cuban with the black Puerto-Rican with the Guatemalan Indian who has just arrived in San Diego yesterday with the Mexican-American gang kids who speak neither English nor Spanish in East LA? What common interest unites these people? Which is another way of saying, 'What culture is there in this company?'

Some Hispanics speak Spanish. Some do not. Some are Catholic. Many are becoming Evangelical Protestants. Some are white. Some are brown. Some are black. The more I think about it, the more I think that one of the few things that unites us—actually the only two things that unite us—one is this business of impurity, that we are making it—America—an impure place. And the second thing that unites us is that we look south when we think of the past. That is our revolutionary gift to you, our cultural inheritance that we bring to this country. We are changing the contour of this country because we are north-south people. And in a country that has always written its history east to west, that has always begun its history in places like this room, begins its history in New England and writes the American story east to west across the page, ending up at Venice Beach, in a country that has always understood itself in one direction only—suddenly, you have millions of Americans who now see themselves on a north-south trajectory. That is revolutionary.

I'd like to propose to you that NAFTA is a new idea in the United States, the notion of a North American Free Trade Agreement, the notion of a North American, indeed—the notion that we are related in any way to Canada, a

country we barely notice, and Mexico, a country we noticed only to take half of her territory in the 19th century. I remember when NAFTA was signed in I think it was in Austin, Texas—San Antonio. The dreary New York Times called me up and they said, 'Would you write something on NAFTA?' And I said, 'I can't write anything on NAFTA. I've never met a North American. I think such a creature does not exist.'

And I thought to myself, 'Well, actually, I do know one. I do know one North American.' In fact, I still know him to this day. He is a Mexican from the state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico. He impersonates an Italian chef in an Italian restaurant at a restaurant in the Napa Valley for about nine months of the year. He is trilingual. He is a Mixteco Indian. The first language that he speaks is Mixteco. His second language is the language of his Colonial oppressors, Spanish. His third language is—he has a working knowledge of English, because, after all, he works here. He deals with two currencies—dollars and pesos.

He knows thousands of miles of dirt roads and freeways. He knows where to hide because he is, after all, illegal. On the United States side he knows how to hide from the US Border Patrol; on the Mexican side, he knows how to hide from the federal officers who are always trying to steal his money. He sends his money home in Western Union 'grams' and he hides the rest in his shoes. He lives in a 16th-century village in Mexico where the Virgen de Guadalupe floats over his wife's bed. In Napa Valley, where everybody's on a diet, there is no Virgen de Guadalupe. There is only Madonna, the Material Girl.

He is the first North American. He sees this hemisphere whole. He is a peasant. And at Harvard, they are now—at the Harvard Business School, they are now talking about this North American, this global reality as through it is a new idea. The peasant has known about it from Mexico and Puerto Rico for about 80 years now.

There is a quarrel right now, the deepest struggle, I think, going on in California about mythology. Which myth applies? What does California mean? What is California? For a long time now, we have, in the United

States, been under the impression that California was the Far West. That was the conventional view of California. 'Go West, young man.' 'Go West, young man, and change the color of your hair and go to Gold's Gym, get a new body, lose weight, become a movie star, change your name, drop your embarrassing surname, become Rock Hudson.' The meaning of the Far West, as early as the 1860s, the American discovery in California was of finitude. We had come to the end of the road in California. America was a finite idea. So in California, in the 1860s, with John Muir, already, the environmental movement begins, the need to preserve the land, the need to take caution. It does not begin in these crowded brick cities of the East Coast, this notion of a finite America. It begins at the end of the continent.

I've always thought that the innovation that comes in California results from its being at that location, at the edge—the suicide capital. You know, we think about the Heaven's Gate suicides of a few months ago—in the 1920s, Edmund Wilson talks about this in "The Great Earthquake." In the 1920s, the suicide capital of the United States was San Diego, which also had one of the highest incidences of mental illness. And Wilson concludes that this is what happens when you come to the end of the road. You have been told that everything will be OK if you move West. Having gotten there with no place more to move, what do you do now? You look to the sky. I think it's no coincidence that along that coast of California, in 1911, already, in San Diego and Point Loma, the first New Age religions begin to emerge. Religious eccentricity of various sorts flourish in California. We have to reinvent paradise.

We also, it seems to me, now have to reinvent the notion of infinity. And I think it's no coincidence so much technological innovation is happening along that strip of land that stretches from North County, San Diego, all the way up now to Redmond, Washington. Why there? Why are people entering cyberspace with such ease at that place on the land? I'd like to suggest that maybe it has to do with the fact that what we know at the Far West is that the land has come to an end.

But has it? There is today, in about an hour, a procession of planes coming to LAX from Asia, and the nativists keeps telling the Asian, you know, that 'We

are sort of glad to see you, but we don't have any more room in California. We've come to the end of things in California.' And the Asian says, 'Well, you know, I've always thought this was where America begins. I thought this was where the continent begins.' What will the history of America look like if you write it in reverse, if you write it from west to east? Have we even imagined such a history?

And then there was my father—I used to go to the cowboy movies and I would always root for the cowboys against the Indians, but my infuriating father, my Mexican father, who always was out there to convince me I didn't live in the West at all, but in the *el norte*. What was *el norte*, for God's sakes? Were there any cowboys in *el norte*? People in Mexico go to *el norte* not because they want to find a new future, they go to *el Norte* because they want a dreary job working at a dry cleaner's in LA. People go to *el Norte* without the same sense of disconnection from the past that the Western traveler had. You travel east to west and follow the light of the day. You leave the past behind. You travel north and south and you begin to resemble a monarch butterfly or a whale. You move with the seasons.

The laborer who worked six months of the year in the North and returned South every year, who infuriated Americans, because they didn't understand what that north-south journey might mean. And now we are becoming north-south people. All over this country you see it. You see grandmothers in Minnesota who live not in some east-west calendar, but by north-south calendar. They spend their warm months in Minneapolis and they spend the cold, cold months in Florida. And all over the country now I meet teen-agers who are basically not between coast-to-coast, as we used to imagine this country, but between hot and cold, between desert and tundra—the new extremities of this country, the new way that America exists, a north-south direction, *solsticio*, seasonal, pagan.

I think to myself, you know, of all the things that Bill Clinton represents for me—that nothing he did compares to NAFTA, this notion given to the United States that you are related to Canada and you are related to Mexico. You go to northern Mexico, and, god, it looks like San Diego these days.

Northern Mexico's filled with Gold's Gyms and Hard Rock Cafes. Everybody wants to be an American in northern Mexico. Everybody in northern Mexico knows what it is like to be a neighbor of the United States of America, the way you will hear her music, the way you will taste her food, the ways she is inevitable.

You go to south Texas, of course, and it's becoming very Mexican these days. And it surprises us because our notion of community never extended beyond our borders and certainly never extended in those directions. If you look at the map now, the Hispanic map of the United States of America, and one of the weirdest things that's going on now is the reconquest of the Spanish Empire—Florida, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, California, Nevada. Hispanic—just as they were in the early 18th century.

Los Angeles, the immigrant city, the immigrant capital, the new Ellis Island. Los Angeles—this morning in Los Angeles, the Aztecs are playing Little League baseball and the Mayans are making beds at the Holiday Inn. We are under the conviction in Los Angeles, of course, that the Indians died. We wrote that in the movies we made for a long time, but the Indians are everywhere in Los Angeles, and one of these mornings in one of those dreary sort of side page pieces, The New York Times is going to announce that the Indian did not die. The Indian is everywhere in Los Angeles.

I know that there are people in this room concerned by diminished civility in the United States of America and especially in a city like Los Angeles. But may I suggest that there are uses of incivility, too. And I don't want to be casual about this, but I do think that the formation of a society does not happen easily—that does not happen with all of us feeling good about each other, does not happen because we all sort of like each other.

Coca-Cola has this dreary commercial that they pull out at Christmastime where they have everybody come sing about Coca-Cola with these ethnic costumes, and we all sing about this universal experience of Coca-Cola as Poles or as Czechs or as Mexicans or as Japanese—well, it doesn't happen that way. Birth doesn't happen that way with all of us feeling good about each other. Sometimes birth happens at Denny's when the red-headed waitress has

to communicate with the Mexican who's flipping the pancakes, and she doesn't have the words and so it ends up with this compromise which is—`Dos huevos, over easy!' she screams back to him. `Dos huevos over easy'—I thought to myself—well, that's sort of interesting.

1992 we had in Los Angeles, one of the great urban riots of American history, a terrible event that began as a black-and-white event but within hours, ended up involving Korean businessmen, and you ended up the next day with Salvadoran women resting with Mexican women outside of Kmart for boxes of Pampers. You cannot have a black-and-white riot in a multiracial city. We still haven't learned that yet.

The most interesting thing about that riot for me was the way the city got formed in the riot, from the terror of those evenings. On the famous West Side—the famous West Side of the city—everyone went to bed—I think it was that first Thursday—and you saw on television neighborhoods that you never had to visit. LA was famous, after all, as the city of separate suburbs, separate freeway exits. You never went to that other part of town, and there it was. You saw it on television. But the interesting thing about that evening is the way those neighborhoods got closer and closer and closer. And by about 4 in the morning, you began to hear fire sirens on the West Side of town. And you could begin to smell the smoke and for the first time, I would like to argue—for the first time, Los Angeles realized that it was one city.

And it didn't realize this out of some good feeling. It realized this in terror. People went to their closets for guns and suddenly realized that `This street, the street I live on, is, in fact, connected to their street,' and that we do not live in separate parts of town, after all. We live in a single city. We have still not gotten over it. We are still terrorized by that knowledge. There are people in Los Angeles who still will not drive downtown because of what they know, that we are one.

I'm running out of time. There's so much I need to tell you. I was standing recently in Tijuana, a city that interests me very much. I think of it as the true capital of California, not Sacramento—Tijuana, the city that Gramps used to go to at night. Tijuana, where generations of American men went. Whenever

anything was illegal in the United States you could get it in Tijuana, what was Mexico, after all, but lawless. When boxing was illegal in San Diego, you went to see boxing in Tijuana. When gambling was illegal in San Diego, you got it in Tijuana. When drugs, women—women—women, booze—Tijuana.

I was doing a documentary for British television recently in Tijuana on Avenida Revolucion, and on Saturday nights you can still see the teen-agers come from San Diego into Tijuana and I asked these girls, 'Now why'—this is on a British television. 'Why, at a time in which you can do anything in San Diego—you can change your sex, have an abortion, take drugs—you can do anything in San Diego—why do you come to Tijuana?' The girls said to the British audience—she said, 'Because it's cool to get drunk in Mexico.' Impure Mexico, lawless Mexico, sinful Mexico—they're giving us our drugs, you know. If we could only stop them from producing drugs, we would not have a drug problem in San Diego.

Sometimes I stand there on the line between San Diego and Tijuana and I talk to those kids. I do not talk to them about Benjamin Franklin or Tom Paine. They've never heard of the Bill of Rights. They are coming, they say—they are coming, many of them illegally—they are waiting for dusk to make a run. They are coming because there is a job in Glendale waiting for them or they are picking peaches near Tracy and they know somebody who can get them a job. They are not coming for welfare. They're not coming for our famous freedoms.

There is no politician I know of who will tell you the truth, and that is that we cannot stop them from coming. The fact is that there is a 2,000 border that cannot be fully defended. We insist in this day and age of speaking of illegal immigration and we talk of Mexicans or we talk of Albanians or we talk of Turks and we talk of Nigerians. All over the world, the illegal immigrant has a nationality, but I tell you that the real interest that I have in these kids is not so much that they are Mexican, but that the poor cannot be stopped. The poor are mobile all over the world. And we of the middle class—we do not know how to stop them, how to keep them out of our society, and the truth is that we don't want to keep them out of our society. And these Mexican kids know.

They know that you will hire them to wait with your dying mother. They know that you will hire them to do their gardening. They know that you will hire them to make your pizzas.

In Mexico, there are two ways. There is the realm of the public in which the politician says one thing and everyone knows the opposite is true. The judge says, 'Five years,' and everyone knows, 'Well, it could be five years or a year.' And the price of the jar in the store says 50 pesos and it might be 50 pesos and it might be 10. Nothing is what it seems in the public realm. And Mexicans hear Pete Wilson. The Mexicans hear Bill Bennett or the Mexicans hear Bill Clinton talk about illegal immigration and they know that the public means one thing and the private means another. There is work in San Diego if you can make it across.

There is something so innocent sometimes about that movement, so innocent and so without ambition for ideology or nationality—simple movement, adolescent movement, the journey north toward adventure. There is something almost sexual about it sometimes. You talk to these kids in Los Angeles about how they come here at 14 and are passing out leaflets on Broadway at 14. It is like asking a child to stay away from its mother's tit. There is something in the night that lures them. And alternately, as we realize that the gate will not hold, we are bringing them into our house.

In the 1970s, I remember in Los Angeles at the very time when people began to realize that LA might not be a West Coast city with palm trees and beachfront, but might, in fact, be a desert city with Indians. At the very time when the very mythology of that city—from blonde to brown—was changing, people began to romanticize brownness on their terms. They began to bring cactus into the house. They took the curtains off the windows and brought the desert light in. And there was an aesthetic that attempted to deal with something that was fearful, to make beautiful something that was fearful.

I tell you, the only way that fear is not only met by withdrawal; sometimes fear is met by a kind of seduction, that what you want to do when you fear the darkness, when you fear the brown man in the dark, is that you look for brown men on the soap opera that you can fall in love with. There will be

more brown men on your soap opera, I tell you, as a fear of Mexico grows deeper, not fewer. We end up locking black males at an extraordinary rate, I tell you, because we are afraid of black males and we don't know what to do with black males, but we end up marrying Chinese women because we don't know what to do with China either.

The great ancient societies—France would marry England—would give her daughter to England as a way of placating England, as a way of dealing with England, as a way of making England part of the family. We are giving each other our daughters. We are marrying each other as much out of fear as out of some other yearning, I would argue.

Meanwhile, at the Hollywood restaurant, which is smokeless, I was talking to a Hollywood producer recently. And he predicted that the cowboy movie is about to make a resurgence. We were surrounded by these Indians, all of whom were serving us and cleaning our plates. And there was this Indian standing next to us as this Hollywood producer said, 'You know, I'll bet you, within 10 years, that the Western is going to be the biggest genre in Hollywood films.' And the Indian looked at us and said, 'Decaf or regular?'

I have written against bilingual education, as some of you know, and I'm skeptical of it because it does not work. It does not work. And it is based upon a romantic pedagogy of using family language in the classroom, which seems to betray both intimate language and the proper purposes of classrooms, but no further with that.

People ask me all the time, 'Do you envision another Quebec forming in this country from all of this immigrant movement? Do you see a Quebec forming in the Southwest, for example?' And I say, 'No, I don't see that at all.' And, yes, Hispanics have the highest dropout rate of any ethnic or racial group in this country from high school. But, no, I do not see Quebec forming.

I do see something different happening with the immigrant population who are as much as 10 years younger than the national population, who are more fertile than the national population. I see their movement as the movement of youth in a country that is growing middle-aged. We are now more than 33

years of age in a country that is settling down more. They are people of movement. They are the archetypal Americans at the time when we have become post-Americans.

And there is Shirley MacLaine, the actress, the great-great-great-granddaughter of pioneers, who was under the impression that she's a 14th-century Peruvian Indian at the very same time that the Peruvian Indians in Los Angeles are converting to Evangelical Protestantism. And isn't that interesting, that the granddaughters of pioneers are going to sit down and communicate with the dead Indians while the live Indians are going to Los Angeles to get jobs making beds at the Holiday Inn? Evangelical Protestantism at the rate at which Latin America's converting now to Protestantism, the (unintelligible) suggested that maybe by the year 2070, if this conversion continues in countries as it is now, —Guatemala, Brazil—by the year 2070, Latin America will be in its majority Protestant, and not simply Protestant but Evangelical Low Church Protestant. Praise the Lord.

I met three boys recently from a group called Victory Outreach, [an] evangelical group which works along the border between the United States and Mexico with kids who have serious drug or gang problems, and here they were; 504 years after Columbus, here were these three Indians who told me that they were coming to the United States of America to convert the United States of America back to Protestantism. I thought to myself, 'This doesn't seem like Quebec. This seems like maybe the immigrants are bringing America to us.' And one of the littlest ones said, you know, 'Those Americans,' he said, 'are so sad.' 'Well,' I thought to myself, 'you know, most Americans I know who are now Protestants are all becoming Buddhists or animists or'—the only going religion in our public school now is a kind of Native American animism where you separate plastic from paper.

This year, Victory Outreach is sending missionaries—504 years after Columbus, the Indian is going to Europe to convert Europe to Christianity. Victory Outreach is sending missionaries to Paris, to London—where do you see this in your New York Times?—to Frankfurt—where do you see this in

your Washington Post? Victory Outreach is sending missionaries to Amsterdam. God bless them in Amsterdam.

I was at this small Apostolic assembly in East Palo Alto, oh, about two years ago. It's a mainly Spanish-speaking congregation. It's along 101, right near the heart of the Silicon Valley, just across the freeway, from glamorous Palo Alto. This is the other side. It used to be black East Palo Alto. It's quickly becoming Asian and Hispanic Palo Alto, the same story. There was a moment in the service when newcomers to the congregation were introduced to the entire group. And they brought letters of introduction from sister churches in Latin America. And up they came with their letters of introduction. And the minister would read the letter and would announce their name and their place of origin to the entire community and everyone applauded. And I thought to myself, 'It's over. The border's over.'

These people were not being asked whether they had a green card. They're not being asked whether they're legally here or illegally here. They are being welcomed within this community for reasons of culture. And there is now this north-south line that is theological and it cannot be stopped by any Border Patrolmen.

By the year 2010, the Mormon Church, headquartered in Salt Lake City, founded as the first great cowboy Christian church, the Mormon church will be in its majority Spanish-speaking. Most Mormons will live in Latin America, at which time what will you make of Salt Lake City? You who worry about Quebec, what will you make when the Mormons are in Mexico? What do you know of Quebec? I would like to argue the deepest fear that we have of the South right now is not of their separateness, but that they will replace us, that they want us, that they want to be us, that they want our food, that they want our culture.

Frank Gifford, when he was not otherwise engaged a few years ago, a few months ago, "Monday Night Football" originated from Monterrey, Mexico, a city in northern Mexico with all the charm of a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the 1930s—Monterrey, Mexico, the city of about four million people. Monterrey, Mexico, was host that evening on "Monday Night Football" to the

Dallas Cowboys playing some other team. Dallas Cowboys—America's Team; wife-beaters and drug users. And there at the beginning of the game was this serenade from a group of mariachis in Spanish. And you know what those mariachis were singing in Spanish? 'The Dallas Cowboys are our team. They're Mexico's team.' And I thought to myself, 'Does anybody at ABC News know about this? Do any of you realize that you're about to be devoured? Do you understand that people are looking at you right now?' Monterrey, Mexico, has more satellite dishes per capita than any other city in the world, and they are pointed at you.

We keep looking to Canada. We keep thinking multiculturalism is going to make it all right. It's not going to be all right. You're going to end up with Mexican grandchildren.

I was on the BBC recently, this dreary interview show, and this woman introduced me as being in favor of assimilation. 'Mr. Rodriguez,' she said—'Mr. Rodriguez is in favor of assimilation.' I thought to myself, 'I'm not in favor of assimilation any more than I'm in favor of the Pacific Ocean.' If I had a bumper sticker it would say something like 'Assimilation happens.' You don't sit there in the morning as an immigrant child and think to yourself, 'Well, how much American are you going to become today?' You know, you're going to go down the street and you're going to be 40 percent Mexican and 60 percent American? Isn't it a concept? You don't walk through life like a Canadian with your elbows in, you know, trying to retain your identity. Culture is fluid. It's in the air. You breathe it. You eat it. You see it.

Elvis Presley goes in your ear and you cannot get Elvis Presley out. He's in there. I'm in favor of assimilation. I'm not in favor of assimilation. I recognize that it exists. LA has become Mexican, which is what it always was. Again. LA has, right now—this city, this monstrous city that we identify now as the immigrant capital of America, has three times the miscegenation rate of any of the American average.

And there I was in Merced, California, a few months ago—Merced, California, which is this town in the central valley of California, about 75,000 people, [in] which the two largest immigrant groups now are Laotian Hmong and

Mexicans. And I tell you, the Laotians have never in the history of the world, as far as I know—no history book you ever gave me—the Laotian has never lived next to the Mexican. And there they are in Merced and they're living next to the Mexican. Mexican and Laotian—and they don't like each other, which leads to commissions like this. They don't like each other. And I was talking to these Laotian kids about why they don't like Hispanic kids—or—I'm sorry, Mexican kids. And they were telling me this and they were telling me that and the Mexicans do this and the Mexicans do that, and I thought to myself, you know, 'Something is not computing.' It was sort of like being in a jail talking to my Hispanic prize winner. Something's not computing. And I suddenly realized that these Laotian kids were speaking English with a Spanish accent.

Thank you very much.